



Biggles Breaks the Silence

Capt. W.E. Johns

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Shooting seals in the Antarctic.

Chapter 1

Biggles has visitors

Biggles and his friends, Ginger and Bertie, were in their house in London. They had nothing to do, and so they were tired of life. *carried down*

'I'll go anywhere,' Ginger said, 'and do anything. I just can't sit here without a job. The air force was better than this kind of life.'

Bertie agreed. 'Quite right,' he said. 'We'll soon have to go out and feed the birds in the park. Great fun!'

'Why can't you two rest?' Biggles asked.

'Rest!' Ginger cried. 'I'll have *plenty* of rest when I'm sixty-five. At the moment I'm only twenty-eight.'

'Perhaps a job is coming along now,' Biggles said. He was standing by the window. 'I think we have visitors.'

The bell rang, and Biggles went to the door. Two men were standing outside. One was young, about twenty-five. Biggles thought that he had seen him somewhere before. The other man was big and a lot older.

'Do you remember me, sir?' the young man asked. 'Grimes. I was with you in the air force. I looked after the radio in your aircraft. The boys used to call me Grimy.'

'Grimes? Yes, of course! Come in, please, and sit down. Are you still in the air force, Grimy?'

'No, sir. I've got a little business now—a radio shop. This is my father.'

The visitors were soon sitting down with Biggles and his friends.

'It's my father who wants to see you, sir,' Grimy went on. 'Well, we both want some help really.'

'I'll help you if I can,' Biggles said.

The older man then said, 'I'm Captain Grimes, sir, and I'm a sailor. People usually call me the Skipper. Well, sir, something strange happened to me six months ago. I heard

about a gold crown with diamonds—'

Biggles smiled. 'A—*what*, captain?'

'A gold crown, sir, with diamonds in it. And I think it's still in the same place.'

'Oh, tell us!' Bertie cried. 'Then perhaps we won't have to go out and feed the birds in the park.'

'Shut up, Bertie,' Biggles said. 'Where is the crown, captain?'

Skipper Grimes looked hard at Bertie. Then he said, 'It's in Graham Land, near the South Pole.'

'The South Pole?' Biggles stared at the visitor. 'You aren't making a mistake, are you? How did a gold crown get to Graham Land? Have you seen the crown?'

'No, sir. And I'm not certain about the diamonds, but—'

'You think it's still there. And you want to go and get it. Is that your idea?'

Young Grimy said, 'It'll be fun, sir—if we find it! You used to like a bit of fun in the air force.'

Biggles laughed. 'Yes, but I didn't have to pay for it, Grimy! Going to the South Pole costs a lot of money. But forget that for a moment. Tell me, captain—how did you hear about this crown?'

'Two men were talking about it,' Captain Grimes replied. 'But perhaps I ought to tell the story properly—'

'Oh, yes, please tell it!' Ginger begged. 'We've got plenty of time. I'm only twenty-eight, and Biggles is only—'

'Biggles is only listening,' said Biggles. 'I'm sorry, captain. Please go on. These two children—' he pointed at Ginger and Bertie '—are away from their mothers. It isn't easy to look after them. But if they don't shut up, I'll be very angry.'

'Well, sir,' said Captain Grimes, 'I was in Hong Kong six or seven months ago, and a man offered me a job.'

'The man's name was Lavinsky. He owned a ship—the *Svelt*; and he told me that he had sold her to a company in Chile. Well, Lavinsky wasn't a seaman, but he had to deliver the ship to her new owners. He asked me to sail her

across the Pacific Ocean to Valparaiso.'

'Did you accept the offer?' Biggles asked.

'Yes, sir. I didn't like Lavinsky very much; and the *Svelt's* crew weren't a pretty lot of men. But I had no job at the time, and so I agreed.'

'We left Hong Kong with Lavinsky on board. He was very friendly with the crew—*too* friendly, I thought. Then, a few hours later, I found two other passengers on board. They had very long names, and so I just called them Shim and Sham. Well, the facts were soon clear: Shim and Sham were the real owners of the ship. Lavinsky and the crew were working for them.'

'We sailed on for about three weeks. Then one day Lavinsky said to me, "Where are we now, captain?" I said, "About a thousand kilometres from Valparaiso."

'Lavinsky gave me new orders. "Change course, captain," he said. "The ship's owners want to visit Graham Land. So follow a new course to the south."

'I was very angry,' the Skipper went on. 'I told him that I had agreed to sail the ship to Valparaiso. Not to Graham Land. Graham Land is near the South Pole. There's a lot of ice in the sea; it's a very cold and dangerous place.'

'But Lavinsky said again, "Change course at once, captain. That's an order from the owners. A ship's captain must agree with his owners." Of course, I knew that that was true; and so I turned the ship. We sailed to the south. I thought that the owners and the crew had a secret. And I—I was the only man on board who didn't know—'

'The secret of the gold crown with diamonds!' Ginger cried.

The Skipper smiled. 'No, not yet,' he said. 'But I soon found out. We sailed into dangerous waters. There was ice round the ship, and we saw many big icebergs. You know that icebergs can easily crush a ship; and so I had to be very careful.'

'We reached the ice-fields of Graham Land—and we saw

many seals. The seals were Lavinsky's secret! He and the crew were seal hunters. Every day they killed a lot of young seals, and they brought the furs to the ship. Well, that's wrong, of course. Seal hunters must pay for the seals they catch. Lavinsky and his friends were thieves. But I couldn't do anything about it: I was alone among twenty thieves. Lavinsky was giving the orders. So I sailed the *Svelt* slowly along, and we followed the families of seals.

'One day we saw a ship's mast above the ice. She was an old sailing ship, and the ice had crushed her. She had been there for many years, I thought. Snow and ice almost covered her. One mast had already fallen down; and a second was ready to fall, too. Lavinsky wanted to have a close look, and so he went off in a boat. Shim and Sham went with him.

'They came back about two hours later. And I knew at once that something important had happened. Their faces were white, and their eyes had a funny, wild look.

'I said to Lavinsky, "What did you find?"

'He replied, "Nothing, captain. It's just an old ship."

'“I know that,” I said, “but what's her name?”

'“We couldn't see it. There's too much ice and snow on her.”

Biggles asked, 'Did they bring anything back with them?'

'Nothing,' Captain Grimes said. 'I'm certain about that.'

'So perhaps they didn't find anything.'

'Oh, I think they did. And it wasn't a little thing. They didn't tell me about it. They just didn't want me to know anything. Ten minutes later Lavinsky came to me and said:

"The owners want to go back to Hong Kong. Please set a new course for Hong Kong."

'I was very angry; but I was also tired of them all. So I made a new course, and we left Graham Land.'

Chapter 2

The Starry Crown

'After that, nothing happened for a week,' Captain Grimes went on. 'Then, one night, I heard something. Shim and Sham were talking to Lavinsky in Japanese. I understand some Japanese, and so I listened to them. They were talking about a gold crown that they'd found on the ship. A crown with diamonds in it.'

Biggles laughed. 'I think that must be a mistake, captain,' he said. 'No one has lost a gold crown in the last hundred years. Are you certain about the Japanese words for *crown* and *diamonds*?'

'I'm certain about *crown*; but the other word really means *stars*. I thought that the stars must be diamonds.'

A strange look came into Biggles's eyes. 'Crown and stars,' he said slowly. 'Stars and crown. Wasn't there a—oh, it doesn't matter for a minute. Go on, captain. Finish your story.'

'Well, a month later the *Svelt* crossed the South China Sea. At this time the crew began to give me a lot of trouble. They didn't accept my orders, and they didn't do their work properly. I reported the trouble to Lavinsky; and he said that it was my fault. That wasn't true, of course—'

'Did the crew have a leader?' Biggles asked.

'No—but Lavinsky was always on their side. I thought that the trouble was really Lavinsky's fault. I began to carry my gun with me. One night I was looking across the water, towards China. I could clearly see the lights on the island of Hainan.'

Ginger raised his hand. He said, 'So you were about seven hundred kilometres from Hong Kong, captain.'

'Clever boy!' said Biggles. 'Go on, please, captain.'

'Yes. Just then there was a noise behind me, and I turned. The crew were staring at me—and they had knives in their

hands. I shot two of them, and then I jumped into the sea.

'The *Svelt* was about ten kilometres from land. I'm a strong swimmer, and the crew didn't look very hard for me. Six hours later I was in Hainan. That young man—the captain nodded at Ginger—says that it's seven hundred kilometres from Hong Kong. Perhaps it is. But I went partly by bus and partly by fishing-boat; and I thought it was seven thousand kilometres!

'In Hong Kong, a friend told me that the *Svelt* had arrived. But after a few days she had sailed north—to Japan, he thought.'

'She was going to sell the furs perhaps,' Biggles said.

'Yes. I reported the seal hunters, of course; and I also said that the crew had tried to kill me. Well, sir, I've just reached England, and that's my story.

'I told it to my son. And he thinks that you can help us. The gold crown is still in that old ship. Do you think we can go and get it? One thing is certain: Lavinsky didn't bring it away with him.'

Biggles smiled at the sailor. 'That's true, captain,' he said. 'Lavinsky didn't bring it away with him. The crown was too big—much too big—for him.'

'What do you mean, sir?' Captain Grimes asked. 'How can a—?'

'It isn't a gold crown,' Biggles said. 'It's made of wood.' He smiled again. 'It's the name of a ship, I think. The *Starry Crown*. She used to sail between Australia and London. And she disappeared about a hundred years ago.'

Captain Grimes's face was very sad. 'I've never heard of her,' he said. 'Well, well—I thought it was a real crown.'

'Of course, you did. Not many people have heard of the *Starry Crown*. But I've always liked true stories about ships that disappear. . . . And perhaps Lavinsky did say the Japanese word for *gold*. Wait a minute, captain. I've got some stories from old newspapers in my desk.'

Biggles often cut interesting stories out of newspapers and

stuck them in a book. He took the book out of his desk and turned the pages slowly. He read one of the newspaper stories for a few minutes.

'Yes, I was right,' he said then. 'The *Starry Crown* disappeared while she was sailing to London. She had a ton of Australian gold on board. Of course, the ship's owners had the proper insurance papers from a London company. And after a time they received the insurance money for the ship and the gold.

'The next news came in 1920,' Biggles went on. 'An Australian ship—the *Black Dog*—was hunting seals near Graham Land. One day icebergs crushed the ship, and the captain and twenty men died. But two seamen were working on the ice at the time, and so they were all right. Their names were Last and Manton.

'Well, Last and Manton found the *Starry Crown*—and the ton of gold. They also found plenty of food on board—'

'Ugh!' said Bertie. 'It was forty years old—that food!'

'Shut up, child,' said Ginger. 'Food stays good for a thousand years at the South Pole, doesn't it, Skipper?'

'Yes, I think perhaps it does,' Captain Grimes said. He turned to Biggles. 'What happened to Last and Manton?'

'They lived on the *Starry Crown* for six months; and they didn't see another ship. Then Manton got ill.' Biggles touched his head. 'He went mad—'

'Like you, Ginger,' said Bertie quietly.

'—and he tried to kill Last with a knife. But Last had a gun, and he shot Manton dead. Last dug a hole in the ice. He put Manton's body in the hole and covered it with big pieces of ice. Then he wrote Manton's name on a board; and he fixed the board in the ice.

'After that, Last thought he was going mad too. So he mended an old boat on the *Starry Crown*. He made a sail for the boat, and he put some food on board. Then he pulled the whole thing across the ice to the sea.'

'Didn't he take any gold in the boat?' Ginger asked.

'I don't think he did. He was just trying to save himself. The boat and the food were heavy enough, without any gold.'

'What happened to him?' Captain Grimes asked.

'An American ship found him in his boat. Last was half-dead then. He told the Americans about his ship, the *Black Dog*; but he didn't say anything about the *Starry Crown*. Later he reached Australia. He was very weak and ill, and he didn't live long. When he was dying, he told his cousin about the gold. The cousin wrote to a newspaper, and so we know the story.'

'Didn't anyone go and look for the gold?' Bertie asked.

'Well,' said Biggles, 'people thought that Last had gone mad. I'm not surprised really. But now we have Captain Grimes's story, and the picture is different. If the *Starry Crown* is still there, then the gold is almost certainly there too. Do you know the ship's position, Skipper?'

'Oh, yes. She's in the ice, of course.'

'Did Lavinsky know her position?'

'I didn't tell him. I used to write the *Svelt*'s position every day in the log. We were sailing about thirty kilometres a day.'

'And Lavinsky still has the log?'

'Of course. The ice is moving slowly—not all the time, but certainly in spring and summer. Big pieces of the ice-field break away in spring; and that's very dangerous for ships. If a big iceberg comes between a ship and the open sea, the ship won't get away easily. I think that happened to the *Starry Crown*.'

Biggles said, 'Tell me, Skipper: why didn't Lavinsky bring the gold away with him? You knew that he had found something big—something important. Why did he just leave it there?'

'There wasn't enough time,' Captain Grimes replied.

'The ice was coming closer to the ship every hour. We just couldn't stay in one place for more than two or three hours.

But, of course, Lavinsky and his friends will go back there.'

'So if you want to get there first, Skipper, you'll have to fly.'

'Yes, sir,' said young Grimy. 'We thought that you—'

'Could fly down to the South Pole for a week's holiday?'

Biggles laughed. 'That's a very big job, Grimy—and it'll cost a lot of money. I've never been to the White Continent, but I know the facts. It's about fifteen thousand kilometres from here. There are ten million square kilometres of ice and snow; and nobody lives there.'

'Only the seals,' Ginger said. 'And they like cold weather.'

'There's just one chance,' Biggles said. 'Perhaps the government will help; and that means the air force really. Governments always need gold. If the government likes the thought . . . a ton of gold—perhaps they'll help. It's our only chance.'

'I've been thinking, sir,' Captain Grimes said. 'The insurance company paid for the gold, and so the company rightly owns it. They own the *Starry Crown*, too, of course. Does that mean—?'

'It means—we'll have to get permission from the company,' Biggles said. 'Find out the name of the company, captain. Go to their offices and ask for permission. I'll go to the government—'

Ideas came quickly to Biggles. He always liked a hunt, and this was a hunt for gold: a ton of gold! 'We'll have to be quick,' he told Captain Grimes. 'Or Lavinsky will get there before us. We really ought to have two aircraft for a trip like this.'

'And I'll need all my winter clothes,' said Bertie.

'Yes, you will, my boy,' Biggles replied.

Chapter 3

The White Continent

Ten days later two rather old air-force bombers left England together. The trip was a long one. The aircraft first flew to West Africa. Then they crossed the Atlantic Ocean to Brazil. They followed the coast of South America—Rio de Janeiro, Montevideo—to the Magellan Strait. They turned east then, to the Falkland Islands. They landed there five days after they had left England.

Biggles and Ginger were the pilots of the first bomber, and Captain Grimes was their passenger. Bertie and another pilot, Algy Lacey, flew in the second aircraft. Young Grimy went with them.

The planes were not fast, but they were very strong. And they carried a lot of fuel. Biggles knew that Graham Land is nearly two thousand kilometres from the Falkland Islands. So the planes had to carry enough fuel to fly about five thousand kilometres. The bombers also had long skis beside their wheels; and so they could land or take off on hard ground or on snow.

In the Falklands Biggles gave orders to his men. 'Bertie,' he said, 'and you, Algy, must stay here with your aircraft. The others will come with me in mine. If we find the gold, we'll have to use both aircraft. So we'll call you on the radio when we need you. And if anything happens to us, you'll come and save us!'

'And come quick,' said Ginger.

Early the next morning, Biggles took off in the first plane. Ginger was beside him in the second pilot's seat. Captain Grimes and his son sat behind them.

No one said much in the first two hours. Then they saw a small iceberg. It shone green and blue in the sunlight. 'It's beautiful,' Ginger thought, 'but very dangerous.' The bomber and its engines held the lives of four men. 'If

anything happens to the engines,' he thought, 'we'll—'

Perhaps the Skipper had the same idea. 'Only seals and fish can live down there,' he said. 'The sea is very, very cold. If a man falls into the water, he'll soon die. Three minutes—perhaps only two—and that's the end.'

The plane flew on to the south. Ginger listened carefully to the sound of the engines. The four men tried to talk.

'It never rains in Graham Land,' Biggles said, 'but it often snows. Snow and ice always cover the land. They never go away, and so we call it the White Continent.'

'It's never dark at this time of year,' said the Skipper. 'You can always see the sun. I think that ought to help us.'

The bomber flew on—south, always south. There were many big, flat icebergs in the sea below. 'The ice breaks away from the coast,' the Skipper said. 'That's always dangerous—'

'Look!' Biggles cried. 'Graham Land!' He pointed to a white line far away. 'It isn't like "land", is it?'

'How do we know—which is ice and which is land?' Ginger asked. 'It's just like one big iceberg.'

The bomber flew down the west coast of Graham Land. There was green water and ice on the right: ice and the White Continent on the left. It was a beautiful but dangerous picture.

Biggles pointed. 'That high wall of ice—the land ends there,' he said. 'Can you see anything you know, Skipper?'

'No. I was on a ship before. This is different! We haven't reached the right position yet, have we?'

'No. You saw the *Starry Crown* about a hundred kilometres from here. We're flying towards her now.'

'The ice-field moves slowly to the north,' the Skipper said. 'I'll look for the ship's mast—if she still has a mast!'

Biggles followed the wall of ice. After a time he said: 'I'll go down a bit lower. Watch those icebergs, Ginger; we don't want to fly into anything big! A few big ones have a cloud over them, and you can't see their tops.'

Ginger said nothing. He wasn't afraid; but how could they possibly find a little ship in that great white desert? The *Starry Crown* must be under tons of snow and ice. Biggles flew lower: three hundred metres... two hundred... a hundred and fifty. Ginger pointed to a family of seals on the ice. Then a dozen big brown birds appeared round the plane.

Biggles turned away from them in a wide circle. 'This is the position you gave me, Skipper,' he said. 'But we'll never see the ship from up here.' Biggles wrote their position on a piece of paper, and he gave the paper to Grimy. 'Call the Falklands on the radio,' he said; 'and tell Bertie that we're here. I'm going to try to land. Flying about is just wasting fuel.'

He turned to the others. 'I hope you all agree. We must land and look for the ship on the ground; or we must go home. Landing on snow could be dangerous, and so I want every man's permission.'

Ginger nodded. 'Go down,' he said. 'Let's take a chance. We ought to be all right with those skis on the wheels.'

The skipper and Grimy also agreed.

Biggles flew low over the nearest flat snow-field. 'I think it's hard enough,' he said, 'and flat enough.' He turned the aircraft and put it down slowly. The sound of the engines dropped. Ginger's mouth opened. Nothing happened. At the same moment the engines roared again, and the bomber began to climb.

Biggles laughed. 'What do you think of that, Ginger? Landing on snow... I thought we were down; but we were about a metre too high. Snow and this grey light aren't easy.'

The next time Biggles made no mistake. The bomber's skis touched snow and roared angrily. A cloud of snow blew up. The plane stopped quite suddenly. Ginger's mouth was dry. 'I'm glad we've got the skis,' he said. 'This aircraft really wanted to stand on its nose.'

Biggles looked at him and smiled. 'We're down,' he said, 'in one piece. How do you like the bottom of the world?'

'Let's go outside and see,' said Ginger.

The bottom of the world was very, very cold. The snow was not deep; and under it, there was hard ice. The sea was about three hundred metres away. A wink was shining on the blue and green hills—ice-hills!—of Graham Land.

The gold hunters put up a tent beside the plane. They moved beds and a stove and food into the tent. Ginger and Grimy made a hot meal and some tea.

'How shall we look for the ship, Skipper?' Biggles asked.

'There's only one thing we can do,' the skipper replied. 'We must search this part of the coast, north, south and east. Our camp here will be the centre of a half-circle.'

'Perhaps the ship freed herself from the ice,' Ginger said. 'Could she just sail away to the west?'

'Oh, no,' Captain Grimes answered. 'The ice has held her for a hundred years. It has crushed her below the water line. She must stay in the ice or—or go straight to the bottom of the sea.'

'We'll search for ten kilometres round this camp,' Biggles said. 'If we don't find her, we'll move camp to the north. That's the way the ice is moving.'

The Skipper agreed. 'I hope it stays fine,' he added. 'If it snows, we'll be in trouble.'

'We'll begin at once,' Biggles said. 'We couldn't stay together, but we must do the job properly. We don't want to lose anybody. So one man must stay in camp with a gun—'

'Quite right,' the Skipper said. 'I lost a man here on my last trip. His name was Larsen, and he was the best seaman on the *Swift*. Well, we were ready to leave, but there was still one seal fur on the ice. Lavinsky didn't like Larsen; and so he asked Larsen to go and get it. And Larsen didn't come back. The ice was moving closer all the time, and we left without the poor fellow. It was an order from the owners,

and I had to accept it.'

No one said anything for half a minute. Then Ginger asked: 'The man who stays in camp—why does he need a gun?'

Biggles laughed. 'He can shoot a seal for dinner!' he said. 'Think, Ginger: perhaps it'll snow while we're searching. Then the searchers won't be able to see the aircraft—'

'Yes, yes. He'll fire the gun, and we'll find the camp.' Ginger turned away with a red face.

'Grimy, will you stay here?' Biggles asked. 'You can fill up the stove again and cook another meal for us. Skipper, you go along the ice-wall to the north. Ginger—to the east. I'll try to stay in the middle. Be back here in about two hours' time. After that, Grimy, fire the gun!'

The three searchers left the camp. Two hours later Biggles and the Skipper returned. They hadn't found the *Starry Crown*. After a time Ginger returned too—with a very white face.

'What's the matter with you?' Biggles asked.

Ginger sat down. 'It began to snow,' he said. 'I couldn't see the plane—I couldn't see anything! Then I thought about Larsen—'

Biggles laughed. 'Don't think about him, Ginger! I felt a little snow too, but I could always see! Come into the tent and have some tea. We didn't see anything like a ship. Did you?'

'No.'

Chapter 4

Into the past

'No. I didn't see anything like a ship.' The answer was the same for the next two days; and the gold hunters began to lose hope.

The weather stayed fine, with only a little snow. But Graham Land was very, very cold: a cold, silent desert of white mountains and grey valleys. Only one sound broke the silence—the noise of icebergs. Sometimes the ice broke away with an angry roar that filled the air. Sometimes it broke away without the smallest sound.

On the third morning, Biggles said: 'We'll try again today. There's only one part—the south-west—that we haven't searched.'

'What shall we do if we don't find the ship?' Ginger asked.

'We'll move camp,' Biggles replied. 'I'll stay here this morning and warm up the bomber's engines. Skipper, will you go to the left? Ginger—to the right, along the coast; Grimy can search the ground between you.'

Ginger's job was perhaps the hardest. The ice-wall was not flat, and so he had to climb a lot. But he was glad about one thing: he was usually quite near the sea. He walked for more than an hour.

He climbed out of a deep, silent valley towards some high mounds of ice. He thought they were only about half a kilometre away; but he was wrong. They were on the other side of a large, flat snow-field. Ginger crossed this and began to climb again.

While he was looking round for a moment, his leg hit a sharp piece of ice. He was wearing thick trousers, and so the cut didn't really trouble him. He looked at the stick of ice. Of course, there was ice all round, but this piece was rather different. It stood alone on a little mound of ice and snow. It was the shape of the ice. . . . Ginger was looking at a cross made of ice.

The long leg of the cross was deep in the snow. There was a straight piece of ice across the top. 'Very funny,' Ginger thought. 'I've seen some strange shapes in this desert; but this is the first cross I've seen!'

Ginger pushed back his hat. A cross? He stared at the

and I had to accept it.'

No one said anything for half a minute. Then Ginger asked: 'The man who stays in camp—why does he need a gun?'

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'What shall we do if we don't find the ship?' Ginger asked.

'We'll move camp,' Biggles replied. 'I'll stay here this morning and warm up the bomber's engines. Skipper, will you go to the left? Ginger—to the right, along the coast; Grimy can search the ground between you.'

Ginger's job was perhaps the hardest. The ice-wall was not flat, and so he had to climb a lot. But he was glad about one thing: he was usually quite near the sea. He walked for more than an hour.

He climbed out of a deep, silent valley towards some high mounds of ice. He thought they were only about half a kilometre away; but he was wrong. They were on the other side of a large, flat snow-field. Ginger crossed this and began to climb again.

While he was looking round for a moment, his leg hit a sharp piece of ice. He was wearing thick trousers, and so the cut didn't really trouble him. He looked at the stick of ice. Of course, there was ice all round, but this piece was rather different. It stood alone on a little mound of ice and snow. It was the shape of the ice. . . . Ginger was looking at a cross made of ice.

The long leg of the cross was deep in the snow. There was a straight piece of ice across the top. 'Very funny,' Ginger thought. 'I've seen some strange shapes in this desert; but this is the first cross I've seen!'

Ginger pushed back his hat. A cross? He stared at the

mound of ice. It was about two metres long, with straight sides. It wasn't something that the wind or the snow had made. A cross on a long, straight mound—was it a grave? It could be, Ginger thought. A man had died on the ice—a seal hunter perhaps. And his friends had buried him here. 'What a place for a grave!' Ginger thought. 'I hope this doesn't happen to *me*!' His thoughts ran on—'Poor Ginger,' Biggles was saying, '—he died in Graham Land. We buried him in the ice. . .'

Then, suddenly, Ginger remembered something. It was something that Biggles had said about the *Starry Crown*. A man had killed his friend. Then he had dug a hole in the ice and buried him. . . Was this mound that man's grave?

Ginger's heart beat faster. He took out his heavy knife and began to hit the cross. A piece of ice flew off. He beat the cross again and again. Bits of ice flew all round. In a few minutes he saw the thing he hoped to see. Wood. The ice covered a wooden cross.

Ginger worked on the top part of the cross. 'If the man's name is here,' he thought, 'it'll be on the cross-piece.'

It was. Five minutes later the wooden arms of the cross were clear. Someone had cut the dead man's name into the wood. Ginger read:

JOHN MANTON
R.I.P.

'Rest in peace,' said Ginger. He remembered Biggles's story. Last and Manton. Well, John Manton had certainly rested in peace.

↪ Last had stood over this grave in the silence of Graham Land. Last had dug the grave himself and put the body in it. The body of the man he had shot. Then Last thought that *he* was going mad too! He forgot the gold. He just wanted to get away—get away!

Ginger was suddenly very cold. But the weather hadn't changed. He looked round, and his thoughts grew clear.

Last and Manton had lived on the *Starry Crown*. Did Last dig the grave near the ship? Perhaps he did. There was no need to carry the body far. . . It was quite possible, then, that the ship was near. Or—or it had been near at that time. 'If it's near,' Ginger asked himself, 'why haven't I seen it?'

He stared round. The snow-field was flat. There were only those big ice-mounds which he had noticed earlier. Was all that ice covering a ship? Where was the mast that the Skipper had seen? Ginger walked towards the great white and grey shapes.

He noticed first the lines of a ship's hull. Of course, the snow and ice were very thick, but the shape was right. Then he saw two straight lines of ice across the hull. Ginger knew that they were the ship's masts. They had fallen—and the ice had soon covered them. He reached the side of the ship and stopped.

He had found the *Starry Crown*. That was a great surprise to him, but was the gold still on board? The ship itself was nothing; the gold was everything. 'I must get into the ship,' Ginger thought. 'I'll have a quick look for the gold and then return to camp.'

The hull was about two metres above the ice. Ginger walked round it—and had another surprise. He found a set of steps in the ice that covered the ship. The next minute he was on the deck. A narrow path led from the steps to a hole in the deck. Ginger reached the end of the path and looked down. A dozen steps led down to the cabins of the ship.

It was very beautiful inside. Green and blue ice covered the walls, the floor and the ceiling. The masts had broken parts of the deck; and so light came in through 'windows' of thick, blue ice. Ginger walked down the steps.

The first cabin was a big dining room. There were plates, knives and forks on a table. Bits of food remained on the plates.

'Poor Last and Manton!' Ginger thought. 'They ate at this table fifty or sixty years ago!'

Ginger looked into other cabins. Beds and chairs stood under a thick cover of ice. One cabin had a bed on the floor—and, strangely, the bedclothes were dry. There was no ice at all round that bed.

The last cabin was larger than the others. Light came in through a window of thick ice. Then Ginger noticed a big table in a corner. He stared at the things on the table: a great pile of thick gold bars, seventy or eighty bars...

Ginger's legs were suddenly weak, but he crossed the cabin to the table. He put out a hand. He tried to pick up a bar. He couldn't. It was too heavy. He pulled it towards him. He wanted to shout, but he could only stare.

At that moment a little sound broke the silence. It came from outside—from the deck, Ginger thought. A piece of ice had fallen perhaps. He didn't think about it for very long; but he had a wonderful idea. He couldn't carry a whole bar back to camp. But he knew that gold was rather soft. So he could cut off a corner of a bar and take that back. 'What fun!' he thought, 'when they see it—'

He took out his knife and smiled to himself. He began to cut. The smile died suddenly. There was another sound. This time it was a quiet laugh—a soft but very clear laugh. Ginger was a pilot; and pilots are brave men. He had never seen a ghost in his life. But he remembered the facts. Last had killed Manton on this ship. *In this cabin*, perhaps! Something cold ran up and down Ginger's back.

Was Manton's ghost watching and counting the pile of gold bars? Was the poor fellow *not* resting in peace in his grave? 'Don't be a fool!' Ginger told himself. 'There aren't any ghosts.' His knife bit deeper into the corner of the bar.

For a moment the light changed in the cabin. Something had moved across the window of ice. It was a bird, Ginger thought; but the cabin was a little darker than before. He looked at the window. Was there anything behind that thick blue ice? His eyes moved over it closely. Then they stopped and stared. Cold fingers again ran up and down his back.

Ginger saw a small, round hole in the ice. He stared at something. And something stared back at him through the hole. It was an eye. He could see it clearly: an eye—and a small part of a dead white face. It did not move; but it shone through the hole like fire.

Chapter 5

The ghost in the *Starry Crown*

We have already said that Ginger had never seen a ghost before. He had seen more than a few dead men and he was not afraid of them. He *was* afraid of the red eye that was shining at him.

Why was he afraid of it? Because he didn't understand it. His tongue filled his dry mouth. His hair stood up. For a minute his legs were like water. He could not turn away from the eye. He forgot all about the gold. One feeling filled him: it was fear. He stared at the eye for two or three minutes.

Then he shouted—and the sudden cry gave power to his legs. He turned and ran. He ran back to the steps... to the path on deck. He did not stop or look back. He jumped from the deck on to a pile of soft snow—and ran! He fell once, over Manton's grave. He pushed over the wooden cross, but he didn't pick it up. He had only one idea—get away! He ran for a whole kilometre; and then he looked back. Nothing was following him.

An hour later he reached the camp. Biggles was writing in the bomber's log book. Grimy was cooking a meal over the stove. Biggles put down his pen and stared at Ginger.

'What's the matter this time?' he roared. 'Have you seen a ghost or something?'

'Yes, perhaps—I'm sorry. I've never been like this before. How did you know?'

'Know what, you cabbage? You've got a face like a large spring cabbage. Skipper, bring him a cup of tea. Now sit down on that box, and tell us about it.'

'I've seen—a ghost. I mean a ghost's eye.'

'A ghost's eye? You haven't suddenly gone mad, Ginger, have you? Where did you see this eye?'

'In the *Starry Crown*.'

'Are you telling us that you've found the ship?'

'Yes.' Ginger pointed. 'About five kilometres away—and Manton's grave. I found the grave first. The gold's in the ship, too—a pile of bars.'

'Did you see the gold?' Biggles asked. 'Did you touch it?'

Ginger stared. 'Of course I touched it. What do you think?'

'I mean—you didn't dream it? It wasn't like that eye, was it?'

'Dream it my foot!' cried Ginger angrily. 'I was cutting off a piece to show you.'

'Where is it, then? Show it.'

'I'm trying to explain. I heard a noise outside the cabin. Then, while I was cutting a bit off a bar, I heard a horrible laugh.'

'And you ran away?'

'I did not!' Ginger cried. 'I wasn't very happy about it, I know. There's a dead man in the ice just outside the ship. But I went on with the job. And then—then I saw the eye. And—'

'You ran away, didn't you?'

'Well,' said Ginger, 'it was horrible, and I didn't understand—'

'Didn't understand? What didn't you understand? It was only an eye; and you've seen plenty of eyes before today.'

'Not like this one,' said Ginger warmly.

'Was there only one eye?' Biggles asked.

'I could only see one.'

'Are you telling us that you saw an eye without a face?'

'There was a little piece of white face round it.'

Biggles laughed. 'Did you fall somewhere and hit your head when you were looking for the ship?'

'No, I didn't!' Ginger answered hotly. 'I'm telling you—I found the ship and the gold. I was all right. I was very glad—and then that eye appeared.'

'Where was it?' Biggles asked.

'It was behind a window of thick ice. There was a little hole in the ice; and the eye was staring at me through the hole.'

'Didn't you go close to it? Or look outside? What did you do?'

'I ran! I certainly didn't stop and say "How do you do?" to the thing. I just flew off that old hull like a bird—and ran straight into Manton's grave. So there was a dead man under me and an eye behind me. I tell you—I ran nearly all the way back!'

'Well,' said Biggles, 'let's go and see this wonderful eye, shall we? I've never seen a real one that didn't have a whole face and a body.'

'We must take guns,' Ginger said. 'There's something very strange in that ship.'

'All right. But remember—you can't shoot a ghost!'

The Skipper had listened to Ginger's story in silence. He had heard many stories about ghosts in old ships; and he never laughed at them. He was glad to hear about the gold; so he said to Biggles: 'What shall we do if the gold is there?'

'What do you mean—if it's there?' Ginger shouted. 'Of course it's there! I saw it with my own eyes—'

Biggles laughed. 'Your eyes, Ginger—and the ghost's eye! The idea of a ghost is just foolish. So what about the gold? If we find it, we'll take it out of the ship. We'll put it on the ice somewhere; and we'll radio to Bertie in the Falklands. He and Algy can come and help us...'

An hour later Biggles, the Skipper and Ginger were

staring at Manton's grave. Ginger picked up the cross and showed the dead man's name. 'You see?' he said. 'Who's a cabbage now?'

Biggles nodded. 'It's Manton's grave all right. Let's go and find the ghost.'

They reached the side of the hull and climbed on to the deck. Ginger showed them the hole that led below.

'You two stay here,' Biggles said. 'I'll go and have a look.'

'You needn't tell me!' Ginger cried. 'I won't go another step.'

'Listen, Ginger: if there's an eye down there, it'll have a head. And a head usually has a body! I'm going to find out.' Biggles looked down through the hole. 'It's all very pretty, isn't it?' he said. He shouted: 'Hi! Is anyone down there?'

There was no answer. The next moment something moved at the other end of the deck. Only Ginger saw it. It was a head, a man's head—round and white and red! It disappeared at once. Ginger shouted. Biggles turned. 'What is it now?' he asked.

'A head! With long red hair and a red beard!'

'Where?'

Ginger pointed along the deck. 'It's gone.'

Biggles laughed. 'So the eye has got a head—and a red beard! What's the matter with you, Ginger? You're not usually like this.'

'Things like this don't usually happen,' said Ginger weakly. 'Come on. Let's get off this horrible ship.'

'Don't be a fool!' Biggles ordered. 'I'm going down.' He took the first two steps; and then, very suddenly, he jumped back on to the deck. He was only just quick enough.

An axe flew up the steps and out of the hole. Biggles was very angry; and Ginger had to laugh then. 'See?' he said. 'I told you—there's something funny about this ship.'

'You said nothing about axes,' Biggles replied coldly.

'I didn't wait for the axe,' said Ginger. 'The eye was enough for me.'

Biggles took out his gun and shouted down the steps. 'Come out of there!'

The answer was a mad laugh from the ice under their feet.

Biggles said, 'There *is* something—or somebody—down there.'

'It's a ghost!' the Skipper cried. The old sailor was suddenly afraid. 'Come, man! Let's go—we can't fight against a ghost!'

Biggles held the gun ready. 'If it's a ghost,' he said, 'then a soft-nose bullet won't kill it! I'll just try it and see—'

'Don't, man!' the Skipper begged. 'It's the Devil himself! You can't put a bullet in the Devil. Let's go—quick!'

'No!' said Biggles. 'I'm in charge here; and we're going to find this devil with a red beard.' He called out again: 'You, down there! Come out—let's see you!'

A voice from below cried: 'Go away! Go away! I found the gold. It's mine—mine.'

'Manton's ghost!' the Skipper cried. 'The poor thing can't rest.'

'Don't be silly,' Biggles said. 'It's a man's voice. Who is he, and where did he come from? Perhaps he's mad, like Manton; but he's alive, and he's in this ship. I'm going to find out.'

'He'll kill you, man. Let's leave the gold and go home.'

'We certainly won't,' said Biggles. 'But I'm thinking about the man. He's very sick in the head. We can't just leave him here.'

'What will you do with him if you get him?' Ginger asked.

'We'll talk about that *when* we get him,' Biggles replied. He shouted down the steps again: 'Come out now—and be quick.'

A horrible cry came up to them: 'You want my gold—*my* gold! I know you. I know you very well.'

'Who am I, then?' Biggles asked, with surprise.

'You're John Manton,' the voice shouted. 'I saw your grave outside, and I've heard you—'

Biggles looked at Ginger. 'He thought you were Manton's ghost,' he said; 'and you thought that he—Well, let's say that he's only half-mad, shall we? I'm going to get him.'

'I'll come too,' the Skipper said. 'You stay here, Ginger. Have your gun ready. We don't know this fellow. Perhaps he—'

Biggles and the Skipper disappeared below. A few moments later a man ran across the other end of the deck. Ginger saw a white face, long red hair and a red beard. The man was crying like a child; and he was carrying a bar of gold. Ginger moved fast but not fast enough. The man threw the bar over the ship's side and followed it himself. Then he picked up the gold and ran behind a mound of ice.

Biggles and the Skipper ran up the steps to the deck.

'I know him!' the Skipper shouted. 'I just saw that red hair for a moment, but—I know it! The man is Larsen—a sailor from the *Svelt*. I told you, didn't I? We had to leave him here on my last trip. And, of course, he knew about the ship...'

'And he knows another set of steps out of her,' Biggles added. 'Well now, Ginger, you can forget that ghostly eye!'

Ginger's face grew red. 'Did you see the gold?' he asked

'Yes. There isn't quite a ton on the table. Perhaps Larsen has hidden a few bars in the ice somewhere. He had a chance after you had run away. So I'm glad we came back.'

'Why didn't he hide it before today?' Ginger asked.

'There was no reason, was there? We're his first visitors.'

'So that means—Lavinsky hasn't returned?' the Skipper said.

'Well, he hasn't found the *Starry Crown*. That's certain.'

'What are we going to do now?' Ginger asked.

Biggles pointed to the flat snow-field between the ship and the sea. 'We must bring the aircraft here,' he said. 'I'll

land her on that snow. It'll be quite light enough all night. We'll put the gold out there on the snow too. The best place will be about a hundred metres from the sea.'

Chapter 6

Biggles needs an axe

Moving the gold was hard work. A man could carry only one bar, and there were sixty-nine bars. The job took two hours; and while the men were working it began to snow. At the end Ginger sat on top of the pile and said: 'I'm glad I don't work in a bank! Some poor fellows have to carry gold about every day.'

Biggles looked round. The pile was about seventy metres from the sea. 'There's plenty of room,' he said. 'Landing ought to be easy enough here. We needn't all go back to camp, so will you stay here, Ginger? I don't think Larsen will come back, but—'

'I'll stay,' Ginger said. 'What shall I do if he does come? Perhaps he's been watching us for the last two hours. I don't want to put a bullet in a madman.'

'If this snow continues, he won't find you easily,' Biggles said. 'But if you see him, well—fire into the air; and that ought to drive him away. Later, we'll have to find him and take him home with us. We'll be back here in about two hours.'

Biggles and the Skipper went off across the snow. Ginger was glad to rest for a time. He moved a few bars and made a nice gold chair for himself. Then he lay back and waited. There was no sign of Larsen; and no sound broke the deep silence of the place.

The time went very slowly. Once or twice Ginger talked quietly to himself. 'Men go mad in this white, silent world,' he said, 'and I'm not surprised!' Later, he said: 'Loneliness!

It's a horrible thing—real and heavy and dangerous.'

Then, suddenly, Ginger heard a wonderful sound. The bomber's engines roared into life! It was the sweetest music he had heard for a long time. 'Good!' he cried. 'Biggles is warming them up.' The engines ran beautifully for fifteen minutes. The sound died. 'Good,' said Ginger. 'Biggles is ready to take off. The Skipper and Grimy are getting on board.' The song of the engines again filled the air. 'He's taking off now,' Ginger said. The roar died; came again with full power; stopped. After that there was nothing—only silence and loneliness again.

Ginger waited and listened. Ten minutes, twenty... half an hour. Nothing broke the silence round him. He was very cold, and he began to be afraid. There was clearly something wrong with the plane. Biggles was in trouble. They were *all* in trouble! But Ginger couldn't do anything about it. He lay down on the gold. The snow had stopped. Ginger stared at a round, red ball that was low in the sky. It was the midnight sun of Graham Land.

Ginger was right: Biggles *was* in trouble. The bomber had frozen hard into the ice! The full power of the engines could not move her.

'I'm a fool, Skipper,' Biggles said. 'Why didn't I think of this? The plane has been standing here for four days. And of course the skis have frozen into the ice. We'll have to cut them free.'

It was another long, cold job. The Skipper and Grimy had already packed the tent and other stores into the aircraft.

'We'll have to unpack the heavy things,' Biggles said. 'Bring the axes, Grimy, and a few iron bars. While the Skipper and I are cutting the ice away, you can find an old food box. Make a few flat boards, and we'll push them under the skis.'

About two hours later the aircraft was free. Biggles warmed up the engines again, and then he let the plane

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move forward a few metres. The Skipper and his son packed all the stores into the cabin; and they were ready to take off.

Biggles shouted from his seat: 'Are those wooden boards in the plane, Grimy? We mustn't forget them.'

'No, sir. Shall we need them again?'

'Of course! Or she'll freeze up when we land.'

While Biggles was waiting, he thought about the weather. The clouds were very low. 'What'll Ginger do if there's a snowstorm?' he thought. There was the *Starry Crown*, of course—and Larsen! 'Be quick, Grimy!' he shouted.

Five minutes later the bomber was in the air. Grimy radioed to Bertie in the Falklands:

Ship found. Come at once. Land at new camp five kilometres south of first position.

Biggles flew in a wide circle. He could see the mounds of ice that covered the ship; but he couldn't see Ginger or the pile of gold.

'It's been snowing here,' the Skipper said. 'I hope it hasn't buried our ton of gold!'

Biggles laughed. They were in the right place, and so he had to forget Ginger and the gold for a few minutes. The snow-field was not very big after all; and so the landing was not going to be easy. But he brought the plane down all right and stopped two hundred metres from the *Starry Crown*.

The three men got out. The Skipper and Grimy pushed the wooden boards under the skis. Biggles was staring round.

'I don't understand,' he said. He pointed towards the sea. 'We left Ginger about there, but he isn't there now—'

'Has he gone to the ship?' Grimy asked. 'Perhaps he was too cold to stay outside.'

'Yes—but where's the gold? He couldn't carry a ton of gold with him! We'll just have to search. You stay here, Grimy. Skipper, will you look in the ship? I'll walk down to the sea. Be back here in fifteen minutes.'

And in ten minutes Biggles returned. He had seen no sign

of Ginger or the gold. And 'No one on the ship,' the Skipper reported. He put his hands round his mouth and shouted: 'Ginger! Ginger!' They were real seaman's shouts too, but there was no reply.

'This beats me,' Biggles said. 'How can a man and a ton of gold just disappear like that?' He took out his gun then and fired once into the air. They all listened. A weak reply came—from the sea. Biggles looked at the Skipper.

'That was an echo, I think,' the Skipper said. 'After all, you can get weak echoes from low clouds. And you can also get them from a big iceberg.'

Biggles wasn't sure about it. There were plenty of low clouds over their heads, certainly. And he had seen three or four icebergs near the coast. He looked round again.

'We're in the right place, of course,' he said. 'But hasn't something changed?

'What *could* change?' the Skipper asked.

'I don't know really. It's just an idea I have. Well, we *must* find the answer.'

Chapter 7

What happened to Ginger?

For a long time Ginger didn't move from his gold seat. He was cold and hungry. The silence and the loneliness troubled him too. He thought about mad Larsen: where was the fellow hiding? Had he come back to the ship? Was he looking for the gold? Ginger kept his gun ready in his hand.

Suddenly he heard a sound. But it wasn't the bomber, and it wasn't Larsen. It was some ice that had broken away. . . Then, a moment later, Ginger's seat moved a little. He stood up, and a sick feeling came over him. Was he ill? No—but the ice was moving! He stared at the *Starry Crown*. She was still in the same place, he thought. But what was

that line—that black line across the snow? He hadn't seen that before. He climbed on to the pile of gold and stared. It was water! It was the sea—between himself and the ship! Suddenly he understood. Part of the ice had broken away; and he was on it. He was on an iceberg!

Ginger forgot the gold. He just ran to the water. It was already four or five metres wide. He couldn't possibly jump across in his heavy clothes. He remembered the Skipper's words: 'A man can only live for two minutes in the water. . . ' No. Swimming was no use. The ice-wall was two metres high on the other side. Six metres of water now: it was growing wider in front of his eyes.

The iceberg was going out to sea. A light wind was blowing from the south. And it was blowing Ginger away! Where was Biggles? Where was the bomber? Why hadn't they come for the gold? Well, the plane couldn't land on an iceberg. That was certain. Ginger gave a silent laugh.

He was thinking of Last, Manton's friend; and Ginger agreed with Last. A boat and some food were better than a ton of gold in Graham Land! A man on an iceberg—'He can do nothing without a boat,' Ginger said to himself.

He began to walk round the iceberg—*his* iceberg! It was moving rather quickly. The *Starry Crown* had almost disappeared in the weak light. He stopped and stared at the ice that hid her. After a time he could only see water—and other icebergs. He walked slowly back to the gold and sat down on it. He tried to think.

Was this the end of the gold hunt, then? Perhaps it was. Ginger thought of Larsen: the seaman was still alive after six or eight months in Graham Land; but he was mad, mad. . . Horrible pictures came into Ginger's thoughts: two men—himself and Larsen!—were fighting for the gold; and Larsen had an axe. And Biggles—where was Biggles? Somewhere on the ice, dead perhaps. . .

Ginger felt about in his pockets. He hadn't brought any food with him; but in an inside pocket he found a bar of

chocolate. He ate it slowly. 'Perhaps it's the last thing I'll eat,' he thought—'in my life.' He was glad that he had only one bar.

Then, suddenly, he heard the sound of aircraft engines. He stood up quickly. It was a weaker sound than before: the plane was far away; but it brought new hope. It meant that Biggles was alive.

Ginger knew all the engine sounds. Biggles warmed them up. Then he gave full power and took off. The bomber was climbing. She was in the air and turning. There was nothing wrong, then. He couldn't see the plane, but he followed her course to the ship. She landed there, and the engines stopped.

The sounds were very far away! Two kilometres, Ginger thought; perhaps three. The iceberg was taking him away from the coast and from friends! From life, too? He began to shout: 'Help! Help!' The sounds were like a child's cries. He fired his gun into the air and listened for a reply. None came. The gun was like a toy.

He sat down again and stared towards the coast. Ten minutes later he heard a little 'pop'. Was it a gun-shot? He fired another shot himself and then listened carefully. There was no pop in reply and no echo. Ginger wanted to throw the gun away!

He was tired and very cold. Low clouds hid the sun from him. Ginger stared up at them. Once he thought he saw the bomber—a silent, ghostly bomber. But there was nothing. His eyes were playing tricks in that strange, grey light! He had to keep warm, and so he walked round the gold in bigger and bigger circles.

Suddenly he saw a ship! 'Is it real?' he thought, wildly; 'or is it just another trick of light?' He shut his eyes; then opened them again. The ship was still there—four hundred metres away. Was he going mad, then? No! The thing was real. There were sailors at work on deck! Ginger put his hands to his mouth and shouted.

The sailors heard—and saw him at once. They stared at him. A man shouted orders on board. The ship's nose turned slowly. Ginger wanted to dance and sing. All his fears and his loneliness disappeared. The men were seal hunters, of course, but that didn't matter. They were men—and they were alive! So Ginger wasn't going to die after all. He was very, very glad. He laughed.

Then he noticed the ship's name. *Svelt*. The laugh ended suddenly. This was Lavinsky's ship. Lavinsky had come for the gold! The gold? Well, did that matter? No, it didn't. A ship—any ship—was better than an iceberg. Ginger had to go on board the *Svelt*. He had to take a chance about the gold.

'I'll say nothing about it,' he thought. 'If I show it to Lavinsky, he'll just take it. And—and perhaps he'll kill me and throw me into the sea. Then, of course, he'll turn his ship round and sail away...'

The *Svelt* came nearer. Ginger looked at the pile of gold. Snow almost covered it; and Lavinsky's men couldn't see the seat that he had made. He ran towards the ship. It came slowly to the side of the iceberg. A sailor threw a rope on to the ice.

Ginger fixed the rope round himself; and the crew pulled him on board. A man came across the deck to him. 'Lavinsky,' Ginger thought.

'Where have you come from?' the man asked Ginger, in English.

Ginger was glad that the ship was already moving away from the ice. He pointed. 'From that iceberg.'

'What were you doing there?'

'I was exploring.'

'Where's your ship?' the man asked.

'I haven't got a ship,' Ginger answered. 'I came by air. My friends and I are exploring this part of Graham Land. That ice broke away while I was resting on it. And I couldn't get back on to the ice-field.'

'Where's the aircraft now?'

'I heard her engines about an hour ago. I thought the crew were looking for me. Then you appeared; and I was really very glad to see you!'

The man's next words brought Ginger's heart into his mouth.

'So it was you and your friends who found the ship.'

'Ship?' Ginger said. 'What ship?'

The man laughed. 'We've got radio. We heard a message. It said that they'd found the ship.'

Ginger understood. Biggles had sent a message to Bertie, of course, and the *Svelt's* radio had picked it up. 'Oh, yes,' Ginger agreed, 'there's an old ship in the ice near our camp. It's a dangerous place—so don't go too near it.'

The fellow's voice changed. 'Why not?' he asked slowly.

'Because there's a madman in it.' Then Ginger added:

'May I ask your name?'

'It's Lavinsky; and I'm the captain of this ship. Tell me about this madman.'

'He's on the ship. We went on board her one day, and he threw an axe at us. I've only seen him once—a big fellow with red hair.'

Lavinsky turned quickly to his crew. 'You heard, boys—red hair! Well, we know *him*, I think. I understand now: he went to have a look—' Lavinsky stared at Ginger. 'Did you go into the ship's cabins?' he asked.

'I looked into one or two,' Ginger said, with a smile.

'Then I saw the madman's eye, and I left—quick!'

Lavinsky waited for a moment. He had reached the important question. He didn't really want to ask it, but what could he do? The crew were looking hard at him.

'Was there anything—anything valuable on the ship?' he said.

The moment pleased Ginger. Every man was waiting in silence for his answer. 'Valuable?' Ginger asked. 'What do you mean, captain?'

'Gold, for example,' Lavinsky said quickly.

Ginger smiled at him. 'I don't think there's any gold in that ship,' he answered. 'I'm almost certain there isn't. But if there is, you can have it all.'

'We'll go and see,' said Lavinsky. 'You can go below.'

'Thanks, captain.' Ginger's position was perhaps a dangerous one. But the iceberg, he thought, was more dangerous.

Chapter 8

'You have my permission'

Biggles soon found the answer that he wanted. He walked across the snow-field again, towards the sea. Almost at once there was a roar from the ice-wall; and a great flat piece of ice broke away. It moved out to sea, slowly at first, then faster. Biggles turned and ran back to the aircraft.

'What's the matter with you?' the Skipper asked. 'Have you seen a ghost or something now?'

'No, but we really are stupid. I thought there was something different about this place. Ginger has gone to sea on an iceberg! Why didn't we think of that before?'

Of course, there were many other questions then. Was Ginger still on the ice? Or was he in the water—dead? The gold was heavy—had it fallen into the sea?

'I'll have to take off and look for him,' Biggles said. 'What do you think about the weather, Skipper?'

Captain Grimes looked up at the sky. 'Those clouds,' he said '—there's still some snow in them. But I think the light's getting better. You'll be able to see more if you wait a bit. You'll have to fly low, won't you?'

'Yes. Well, we'll wait a quarter of an hour. While we're waiting, we'll cut up some old boxes for a fire. Bertie and Algy will need a sign of life when they arrive. You can do

that, Skipper, and Grimy can help you. I'll go and warm up the engines.'

Biggles turned and looked for a moment towards the sea. He had the biggest surprise of his life.

A ship! A ship was moving slowly through the ice towards the ice-wall. 'Skipper!' he shouted. 'Look! Can you see—'

'Ye-es' was the slow answer. 'I see—a lot more. I know that ship very well. It's the *Svelt*. So Lavinsky has arrived.'

'I had that idea too,' Biggles said. 'Lavinsky changes the business, doesn't he?'

'What are you going to do?' the Skipper asked quickly.

'Do? Nothing.'

'They're dangerous people.'

'I've met dangerous people before.'

'Well, we ought to do something,' the Skipper said. 'We can't all live happily together on the same piece of ice. Lavinsky's bad—really bad; and the crew are like wild dogs.'

'What do you want to do—run away?'

'Perhaps not that. I don't know.'

'You aren't afraid of them, are you, captain?' Biggles asked coldly; but he didn't wait for an answer. 'We'll have to listen to them. They've seen the plane, and they'll be here soon. They haven't done anything to us yet; so we must give them a chance. If Lavinsky tries to make trouble here, he'll get a surprise.'

'But you can't fight that crew,' the Skipper said. 'There are twenty men on the *Svelt*!'

'Numbers don't always matter. But I'm not thinking of a fight—not yet. I'm thinking about Ginger. We *must* find him quickly. And for that job a ship is better than a plane. Perhaps I'll ask Lavinsky to turn the *Svelt* round—'

'Lavinsky's a fool!' the Skipper cried. 'Look at all those icebergs. They could crush his ship in half a minute. He's bringing her too near the ice-wall.'

The *Svelt's* crew were staring at the bomber. Biggles

raised a hand to them. A sailor threw a rope on to the ice. Another man jumped after it.

'That's Lavinsky,' the Skipper said '—the fellow in the blue coat. Shim and Sham are beside him.'

Biggles was staring at another figure that had appeared on deck. He caught the Skipper's arm. 'They've got him!' he cried.

'Got who?'

'Ginger. He's on deck, behind the others. So they found him and picked him up. Well, that's good news, and it explains a lot.'

'What does it explain?' the Skipper asked.

'Lavinsky found Ginger while he was looking for the *Starry Crown*. And, of course, Ginger had to tell him that we were here. A man on an iceberg has to explain something, hasn't he?'

'Yes—and Ginger was sitting on a ton of gold. Does that mean Lavinsky has the gold?'

'I don't think it does. Ginger isn't a fool. But they're coming; so we'll soon find out.'

Lavinsky, Shim and Sham had jumped on to the ice. They walked up to the plane. Lavinsky spoke first. 'I found one of your boys on the ice,' he said.

'Yes, I see,' Biggles replied. 'You were kind to bring him back. Thank you very much.'

'He told me that you were exploring here.'

'That's right. We're doing a job for the government.'

Lavinsky noticed the Skipper then, for the first time. His face changed suddenly. 'Oh, so *you* are here too,' he said angrily. 'I thought we lost you in the China Sea.'

'I can swim,' the Skipper said.

Lavinsky nodded. 'I understand now. Tell me, where's the ship?'

The Skipper pointed. 'Both her masts are down.'

Lavinsky looked across the snow-field. 'I see. Is the gold still in her?'

'No.'

Lavinsky's little eyes grew narrow. 'Isn't that a lie?'

'Go and look for yourself,' the Skipper said.

'Where is it, then?'

Biggles answered the question. 'We want to know that too.'

'You mean—you haven't got it?' Lavinsky's face was sharp and angry. 'That's another lie!'

Biggles stared at him. He said: 'There's the ship, and there's my aircraft. You won't find the gold in them. You can go and look. You have my permission.'

'Permission!' Lavinsky roared. 'I don't need anyone's permission.'

'Don't talk like that,' Biggles said quietly. 'I'm here on the orders of my government and the company that owns the *Starry Crown*. I'm in charge of the ship. So if you want to go on board her, Mr Lavinsky, you'll have to ask for my permission.'

Ginger had jumped off the *Svelt* and was standing beside Biggles. Lavinsky threw a dirty look at him and said: 'This is a different story from the one you told me.'

'Well,' said Ginger, 'I answered your questions fairly. Remember—I'm not in charge of the work here.'

Lavinsky turned angrily to Biggles. 'What are we going to do, then?'

'About what?'

'The gold, of course. I'm only here for that.'

'If we find the gold,' Biggles replied, 'it will belong to my company and my government. So you ought to turn your ship round and go home. You don't want the *Svelt* to freeze hard in the ice, do you?'

'Go home? With nothing? Certainly not.'

'Please yourself. I can't stand here and talk about it. I've got things to do.'

Lavinsky said, 'If we find—anything valuable, shall we share it? You can have half, and I'll—'

Biggles put his hands in his pockets. 'At this moment there's nothing to share. And I can't share a thing that isn't mine. I told you—the gold belongs to an insurance company.'

'Larsen has hidden it, then,' Lavinsky said. 'This boy told me that he's on the ship. So we must catch Larsen first.'

'He was on the ship, but he isn't there now. Be careful if you meet him. He's quite mad, and that's your fault. He was in your crew, and you left him here. So now you ought to help him. You ought to take him to a doctor somewhere.'

Lavinsky laughed. 'Oh, yes, I'll look after Larsen! Now I want to go on board the *Starry Crown*; so do I have your permission?'

'You do,' Biggles said; 'but don't take anything away.'

Lavinsky and his friends walked away towards the old ship.

Biggles said quietly, 'The job's getting harder, isn't it?' Then he turned to Ginger: 'Well, what tricks have you been playing?'

Ginger told his story in three minutes. At the end, Biggles said, 'Yes, I agree. You had to leave the gold on the ice. Where was the iceberg moving then?'

'To the north-east, I think.'

'How big was it, and what shape?'

'Bigger than a football field; but narrow at one end—rather like an egg.'

'Too small. We couldn't land the aircraft on it.'

'No.'

'Will you know it if you see it from the air?'

'Know it! I'll never forget it. I thought it was going to be my grave. If we fly low, I'll be able to see the gold.'

At that moment Lavinsky and his friends returned. 'There isn't much in the ship,' he said. 'Can I see inside the plane?'

'If you like; there's only our food and a tent.'

Lavinsky came back after a minute. He said to Biggles,

'All right. We're going back on board the *Svelt* now; I must talk to my owners about this.'

'We'll talk about it too,' Biggles said to the others. 'In the aircraft. It's warmer there.'

Chapter 9

One move leads to another

In the plane Biggles said, 'Ginger's iceberg is moving towards the north, and the gold is on it. So we'll go back to the old camp. We needn't stay near the *Svelt*.'

'We'll have to send Bertie another message,' Grimy said.

Ginger laughed. 'Lavinsky heard your last message on the *Svelt*'s radio,' he told them.

'Oh yes,' Biggles agreed. 'Anybody can listen to the radio. Our message didn't help him very much. Well, let's move, shall we? Don't forget the boards, Grimy, and pack the firewood too.'

'What boards?' Ginger asked.

'Oh, we haven't told you, have we?' Biggles said. 'The aircraft had frozen hard to the ice; and we had to cut her free. I'm sorry we were about three hours late! But you were glad to have a long rest, weren't you?'

'Very glad! A trip on an iceberg is great fun. You ought to try it one day.'

'Well,' said Biggles, 'Grimy made some boards that go under the skis. And so the plane doesn't freeze up now.'

Ten minutes later the bomber was in the air. Grimy sent a short message to Bertie's plane. Then Biggles landed again at the first camp. While Ginger was putting up the tent, the Skipper made a pot of tea. Grimy lit a fire at the side of the snow-field.

Bertie and Algy arrived fifteen minutes later. The six men sat in the tent, drank their tea and talked.

'I want to see that ton of gold,' Bertie said. 'When are we going to look for it?'

'Ginger and I will go at once,' Biggles replied. 'You and Algy can rest for an hour. Skipper, will you and Grimy watch the *Svelt*? We don't want Lavinsky to surprise us.'

Biggles and Ginger took off. And almost at once something wonderful happened: the sun shone through the clouds. Ginger could clearly see dozens of blue, green and white icebergs. The hills of Graham Land were like mountains of icecream on a white plate. The view was very beautiful.

Then, a moment later, Ginger shouted: 'There it is!'

'What?' Biggles asked.

'My iceberg! There, look—that big one.'

Biggles could see five or six big icebergs, but one was certainly bigger than the others. That one was only a kilometre from the ice-wall. Biggles turned and flew low over it.

'Yes!' Ginger cried. 'I can see the pile of gold!'

'Don't take your eyes off it, then. It's moving in towards the land. We'll go back and watch it from the camp.'

Ginger kept his eyes on the iceberg while Biggles was landing the bomber. It was, of course, the most valuable bit of ice in the world.

'We've found it! We've found it!' Ginger cried to the others.

Biggles explained. 'There's a wind from the north; and it's blowing the ice back to us with the gold—'

'It's blowing the ice towards Lavinsky's ship too,' the Skipper said. 'The man's a fool. If the *Svelt* stays by the ice-wall, she won't be able to get out again.'

Biggles nodded. 'And that won't be funny. I don't want to take Lavinsky and his crew home by air.'

The gold hunters had a meal; and after it Biggles went down to the ice-wall. Ginger's iceberg was then only a hundred metres away. Biggles could clearly see the mound

of gold. He returned to the camp.

'It won't be long now, boys,' he said. 'Ten minutes perhaps. Grimy, take a gun and watch Lavinsky. The others—come with me; we'll go and get the gold. We'll pack three-quarters of it in your plane, Bertie; and Algy can fly it back at once to the Falklands.'

'Good enough,' Algy agreed. 'I think it's a good idea.'

The big iceberg came in. It was turning slowly in the water. Then the narrow end hit the ice-wall with a roar. Biggles put one foot on a bridge of green ice.

Suddenly there was a shout, and Grimy ran to them. 'It's Lavinsky!' he said. 'With six men. They'll be here in ten minutes.'

'All right. Back to camp, quick,' Biggles ordered. 'They mustn't see us on this iceberg.'

Lavinsky and his men came over some high ground. There was an angry look on Lavinsky's face.

'Where's that gold?' he shouted.

Biggles stared at him and then asked: 'How do you think I know the answer to that?'

'Larsen told me. He watched you when you were moving it.'

'Oh! So you've found Larsen.'

'Of course I found him.'

'The man's mad,' Biggles said. 'Now listen to me, Lavinsky. You left Larsen here last year. If you do anything to the poor man now, you'll be in plenty of trouble. I can promise you that.'

'Bah!' said Lavinsky. 'Larsen will be all right. He told me that you've got the gold. And I'm ready to share it with you.'

'You're not. I told you before—the gold doesn't belong to me. Larsen is right: we *did* move the gold. And where did we put it? Did he tell you that too?'

'He said you made a pile of it on the ice.'

Biggles laughed. 'Right—and it's still there.'

'Where? On the ice? That's a lie!'

'It's true,' Biggles said. 'The ice broke away suddenly, and it took the gold out to sea. You found our man on an iceberg, didn't you? Well, he was sitting on the gold. Now you know: I haven't got it. So leave my camp at once—and don't come back.'

Lavinsky's thoughts showed on his face: 'What a fool I was! That man—alone on an iceberg—*exploring*!' He stared angrily at Ginger. 'All right, brother,' he said quietly. 'I'll get you. I'll get you—and the gold.'

'That ought to be easy,' Biggles said. 'Just find the iceberg—'

'And you—' Lavinsky turned to Biggles '—you stay away from me. If you don't, you'll be able to share Larsen's rope.'

'I'll remember that,' said Biggles.

Lavinsky and his men walked back towards their ship. They went over the ridge of high ground.

Biggles said, 'We haven't got much time. Ginger, go on to that ridge and watch the *Svelt*. Tell me if she moves, or if Lavinsky's men come back here. We're going to be busy for the next hour. Skipper—you, Bertie and Grimy bring the gold here. Algy and I will pack it properly in the aircraft. Let's go.'

The five men moved half the gold from the iceberg to the aircraft. Ginger reported twice to Biggles: Lavinsky and his men had reached their ship. Then the *Svelt* began to move about among the icebergs. Biggles and the Skipper saw her a few times, and they had to smile. Lavinsky was looking for a pile of gold. After a time the ship returned to the ice-wall.

Ginger's next report was: 'Lavinsky and a dozen men are coming back—all with guns!'

'Perhaps this means war,' Biggles said. 'There were still about thirty bars of gold on the ice. Run back, Grimy, and cover those bars with snow. And when you're coming back, brush some snow over our footmarks.'

He turned to Algy then. 'No need to wait, Algy,' he said. 'You've got more than half a ton on board. Fly it straight to

the Falklands. Bertie will stay and help us here. If I want you to come back again, we'll radio to you.'

Ten minutes later Algy's bomber was in the air. The aircraft turned and flew in a wide circle: over the sea and over the *Svelt*. Lavinsky's men came on to the ridge.

'Keep your guns ready,' Biggles said; 'but don't show them yet. What—what's Algy doing?'

The bomber was coming back. In a minute it flew low over the camp. Something dropped from the pilot's window. Bertie ran and picked it up. It was a cigarette box, with a note inside. Biggles read the note and smiled. Then he shouted to Lavinsky.

Chapter 10

Lavinsky shows his cards

'Don't come any nearer!' Biggles shouted. 'What do you want now?'

'You know the answer to that!' Lavinsky cried. 'We've been watching you from the ship. The gold was here all the time. And you've been packing it into the plane.'

'That gold has gone,' Biggles answered. 'It'll be in the Falklands in four or five hours' time.'

'It hasn't all gone. I want the rest of it.'

'And if you get it, what will you do?' Biggles asked.

'I'll sail at once. You can do anything you like then!'

'You'll have to be quick, Lavinsky,' Biggles pointed to Algy's aircraft. It was flying north, towards the Falklands. 'The pilot of that plane has just thrown a message to me. He says that the ice is coming in round your ship—'

'Bah! I'm not afraid of that. Are you trying to—'

'I'm not trying anything. The pilot could see the ice for fifty kilometres round your ship. You can please yourself, of course, but he doesn't make mistakes.'

Lavinsky stared at the bomber on the ground. Then he stared at Biggles. 'If I have to stay, you'll stay too,' he said angrily. 'I can soon shoot a few holes in that plane.'

Biggles laughed. 'Clever boy! And when you're shooting, we'll sit and watch you—right?'

Lavinsky tried again. 'Shooting won't help,' he said. 'If the ice catches us, you won't leave us here, will you?'

'Won't I?' said Biggles. 'You just wait and see! You ought to go back to your ship and sail at once. Before it's too late.'

Lavinsky did not move for a minute. Then he and his men turned and walked away. Six men stayed on the ridge. Lavinsky and the others continued towards the *Svelt*.

'Well,' said Biggles, 'he has shown us all his cards.'

'What cards?' Bertie asked. 'I only saw guns.'

'Yes, but you've got a wooden head, Bertie. You can't think easily. Lavinsky was quite ready to shoot five minutes ago. But now he's going to have a look at the ice. If he can find a path through it, he certainly won't leave. He wants that gold.'

'What are *we* going to do?' Ginger asked. 'Just sit here?'

'Perhaps we ought to get in the plane and leave now,' the Skipper said.

Biggles looked at him sharply. 'And let Lavinsky have the rest of the gold? Certainly not, Skipper.'

'Let's get the gold, then,' Ginger said, 'and take it with us.'

Biggles nodded towards Lavinsky's men on the ridge. 'If we do that, the shots will begin to fly. Just give me a few minutes, and I'll think of something.'

There was silence then. Biggles stared at the iceberg, the bomber, the ridge. . . No one said anything for five minutes.

Biggles himself broke the silence. 'We'll get the gold,' he said, 'and we'll try to get Larsen too. Now listen to me. Skipper, you're the strongest man here. Will you go on to the iceberg and bring back *two* bars?'

'I'll try, sir, of course,' the Skipper said.

'If Lavinsky's men fire at you, we'll have a few shots at them. And Bertie—' Biggles pointed to the end of the ridge 'lie down at that end. Then you'll be able to fire along the ridge. Ginger and Grimy—you can fire from behind the plane.'

The Skipper and Bertie left the camp. The enemy noticed at once; and one man began to run towards the *Svelt*.

'He's going to report to Lavinsky,' Biggles thought.

The enemy fired twice at the Skipper, but the shots were a bit wide. Biggles called to the others: 'Let them have it! Don't waste shots. Shoot straight and low.'

The next minute Bertie began to fire from his new position; and the enemy had to keep their heads down. The Skipper returned with two gold bars.

'Nice work,' Biggles said. 'Put them by the door of the plane. Bertie's keeping those fellows quiet. Can you bring two more?'

'Yes. The nearest shot was three metres from me.'

'They aren't shooting well. I can hold this position myself. Ginger and Grimy—go and help the Skipper. It'll be better if you just carry one bar.'

After that there was no change for almost an hour. And Biggles counted twenty-six bars by the bomber's door. Suddenly Ginger shouted and pointed to the sea.

'Look! A boat from the *Svelt*!'

Lavinsky and six men were in the boat—and moving quickly towards the iceberg.

'Call the Skipper and Grimy!' Biggles shouted. 'Leave the rest of the gold. Lavinsky can have it. Let's pack the plane.'

Bertie appeared then. 'This is getting too hot!' he cried. 'Seven men are running across the snow from the ship...'

Biggles added the numbers: 'Five on the ridge. Seven in the boat. And seven—nineteen. Yes, too many!'

The Skipper and Grimy arrived. The five men worked

quickly, and the gold was soon inside the aircraft.

'How many men did you have in the *Svelt*?' Biggles asked the Skipper.

'Sixteen, I think. And, of course, there were Lavinsky, Shim and Sham and myself.'

'They've all left the ship, then. That's good.'

'What are you going to do?' Ginger asked.

'Give them a surprise,' Biggles said. 'Quick, Ginger—warm up the engines. We don't want any shot-holes in the plane. There'll be nineteen guns round us in ten minutes.'

'We won't need the boards again, will we?' Grimy asked.

'Yes, put them in the aircraft.' The firing began again.

There were a few pops from the boat, and one shot hit the aircraft. Lavinsky jumped on to the iceberg. Biggles shouted above the roar of the engines. 'Get in quick if you want to live!'

Grimy threw the boards inside. Biggles took his seat, and the bomber moved across the snow. She took off rather slowly: the gold was heavy, and there were five men on board.

The plane turned in a circle over the camp. Lavinsky's men were looking up and firing their guns at her. Biggles raised his hand to them and smiled.

A few minutes later there were surprised cries from Ginger and the Skipper. Biggles was landing again! The bomber came down on the snow close to the *Svelt*.

'Why—why—what are we going to do here?' Ginger asked.

'We haven't much time,' Biggles said. 'Lavinsky will soon come back in the boat. Skipper—you know the ship. We *must* find Larsen. Lavinsky said that he'd got him. So take Bertie and Grimy and look in all the cabins. If anyone tries to stop you, shoot. Understand?'

'Yes, sir. If Larsen's on the ship, I'll find him.'

Chapter 11

The end of the story

The wind had changed. It was blowing the icebergs slowly out to sea, away from the *Svelt*.

The Skipper met two old friends on the ship. The first was an old man—the *Svelt*'s cook! The second was Larsen. Larsen was quite ill. Lavinsky's men had certainly caught him. Someone had thrown a knife at his back, and the cut was deep. But he wasn't really mad. He was just afraid. The Skipper and Grimy carried him to the aircraft.

There was a pile of things on the snow outside the bomber: boxes of food, a few camp beds, the camp table. . . . Biggles looked at Larsen's cut. 'It's deep,' he said, 'but not deep enough to kill him. We'll radio to the Falklands; and a doctor will meet the plane there.'

The Skipper was looking at the things on the snow. 'What are you going to do with these?' he asked. 'Leave them here,' Biggles replied, 'or the aircraft won't take off! Now put Larsen inside—there's a camp bed for him—and we'll—'

'Quick!' Bertie cried. 'The enemy! Look—'

Biggles looked across the water. Lavinsky's boat was half a kilometre away. 'Let's go!' Biggles shouted.

Three minutes later the bomber took off. Grimy sent a radio message to Algy—*Don't return. Larsen on board and needs a doctor. We shall arrive in five hours.*

The bomber reached the Falklands without trouble. Algy was waiting for it with a doctor. They took Larsen to hospital.

The next day Biggles went to visit him. Larsen said, 'I took one bar of gold from the *Starry Crown*. I hid it under some ice. Do you remember that?'

'I do! You threw an axe at me, and then—'

'Well,' Larsen went on, 'I didn't tell Lavinsky about it.

So the bar is still there, under the ice. If you take me back in your plane, we'll look for it.'

'Take you back? No. *No, sir!* That gold can just stay there. It can stay there and grow a beard! I'll give you one of our bars, Mr Larsen.'

Larsen was in hospital for a month. After that he was well again, and he had forgotten his fears. The six gold hunters returned to London; and they shared the value of ten gold bars between them.

And Lavinsky, of course, got five or six bars.

Exercises in Comprehension and Structure

Chapters 1 and 2

- 1 (Find the right reason.) Lavinsky didn't bring the crown away with him—
 a) because he didn't want Captain Grimes to see it.
 b) because Shim and Sham were also in the boat.
 c) because it was the name of a ship.
 d) because the ice was coming closer to the ship.
- 2 (Choose the right place.) Captain Grimes left the *Svelt*—
 a) near the island of Hainan.
 b) at an iceberg near Graham Land.
 c) in Hong Kong.
 d) about a thousand kilometres from Valparaiso.
- 3 (Choose the correct fact.)
 a) The *Svelt*'s owners wanted to sell the ship.
 b) The *Svelt*'s owners and crew were gold hunters.
 c) The *Svelt*'s owners and crew were seal hunters.
 d) The *Svelt* was looking for the *Starry Crown*.
- 4 (What happened After—)
 a) the *Svelt* reached Graham Land?
 b) Lavinsky, Shim and Sham returned to the *Svelt*?
 c) Captain Grimes had shot two of the crew?
 d) Last left the *Starry Crown*?
- 5 (Choose the most important idea.)
 a) Last shot Manton after a quarrel.
 b) Last told his cousin about the gold.
 c) Last wrote Manton's name on a board.
 d) The *Black Dog*'s captain and twenty men died.

Chapters 3 and 4

- 6 *Example*: They **landed** in the Falklands five days after they **had left** England.

Complete these sentences. Use the same tenses.

- a) They (see) the first iceberg after they (fly) a thousand kilometres.
 b) When they (land) on the snow, they (get) out of the plane.
 c) After they (return), Grimy (cook) another meal.
 d) Ginger remembered: a man (kill) his friend after they (quarrel).

- 7 *Example*: If a man falls into the water, **he'll soon die**.
 Use facts in the story and complete these sentences.

- a) 'We'll be able to see the ship's mast if she.....'
 b) 'If we're not back in two hours, Grimy..... the gun.'
 c) 'If the man's.....,' Ginger thought, 'it'll be on the cross-piece.'
 d) 'When I'm on board her,' he thought, 'I'll look for.....'
 e) 'What fun! When they see this, they.....'

Chapters 5 and 6

- 8 (Give the men's reasons.)
 a) Ginger ran off the ship. Why? Because he.....
 b) The Skipper didn't laugh at Ginger's story about the eye. Why not? Because he.....
 c) Biggles took two steps—then, suddenly, jumped back on to the deck. Why? Because an.....
- 9 (Give the real meaning.)
 a) 'I flew off that old hull like a bird—'
 b) 'You see?' Ginger said. 'Who's a cabbage now?'
 c) 'You can't put a bullet in the Devil.'
- 10 (Choose the correct answer.) 'The man is Larsen—a sailor from the *Svelt*. I told you, didn't I?' What had he told them?
 a) He said that Larsen was mad.
 b) He said that Larsen had red hair and a red beard.
 c) He said that he had left Larsen on the ice.
- 11 (Read twice. Then fill in every seventh word.)
 Biggles ran the engines for fifteen.... The others packed the stores into... cabin. 'Get on board,' Biggles shouted; '...take off.'
 The Skipper and Grimy ... in. The song of the engines ... the air. It grew quickly to ... roar. The plane did not move. ... gave the engines full power. The ... danced like a leaf in the ... ; but she did not go forward.
 '... is wrong,' Biggles said. 'We'll have ... get out and find the trouble.'
- 12 (Read and then answer the questions.) Grimy radioed to Bertie:
Ship found. Come at once. Land at new camp ...
 a) Where was Bertie? b) What ship had they found?

Exercises in Comprehension and Structure

Chapters 1 and 2

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 - c) because it was the name of a ship.
 - d) because the ice was coming closer to the ship.
- 2 (Choose the right place.) Captain Grimes left the *Svelt*—
 - a) near the island of Hainan.
 - b) at an iceberg near Graham Land.
 - c) in Hong Kong.
 - d) about a thousand kilometres from Valparaiso.
- 3 (Choose the correct fact.)
 - a) The *Svelt*'s owners wanted to sell the ship.
 - b) The *Svelt*'s owners and crew were gold hunters.
 - c) The *Svelt*'s owners and crew were seal hunters.
 - d) The *Svelt* was looking for the *Starry Crown*.
- 4 (What happened After—)
 - a) the *Svelt* reached Graham Land?
 - b) Lavinsky, Shim and Sham returned to the *Svelt*?
 - c) Captain Grimes had shot two of the crew?
 - d) Last left the *Starry Crown*?
- 5 (Choose the most important idea.)
 - a) Last shot Manton after a quarrel.
 - b) Last told his cousin about the gold.
 - c) Last wrote Manton's name on a board.
 - d) The *Black Dog*'s captain and twenty men died.

Chapters 3 and 4

- 6 *Example*: They **landed** in the Falklands five days after they **had left** England.

Complete these sentences. Use the same tenses.

- a) They (see) the first iceberg after they (fly) a thousand kilometres.
- b) When they (land) on the snow, they (get) out of the plane.
- c) After they (return), Grimy (cook) another meal.
- d) Ginger remembered: a man (kill) his friend after they (quarrel).

- 7 *Example*: If a man falls into the water, **he'll soon die**.

Use facts in the story and complete these sentences.

- a) 'We'll be able to see the ship's mast if she.....'
- b) 'If we're not back in two hours, Grimy.....the gun.'
- c) 'If the man's.....,' Ginger thought, 'it'll be on the cross-piece.'
- d) 'When I'm on board her,' he thought, 'I'll look for.....'
- e) 'What fun! When they see this, they.....'

Chapters 5 and 6

- 8 (Give the men's reasons.)
 - a) Ginger ran off the ship. Why? Because he.....
 - b) The Skipper didn't laugh at Ginger's story about the eye. Why not? Because he.....
 - c) Biggles took two steps—then, suddenly, jumped back on to the deck. Why? Because an.....
- 9 (Give the real meaning.)
 - a) 'I flew off that old hull like a bird—'
 - b) 'You see?' Ginger said. 'Who's a cabbage now?'
 - c) 'You can't put a bullet in the Devil.'
- 10 (Choose the correct answer.) 'The man is Larsen—a sailor from the *Svelt*. I told you, didn't I?' What had he told them?
 - a) He said that Larsen was mad.
 - b) He said that Larsen had red hair and a red beard.
 - c) He said that he had left Larsen on the ice.
- 11 (Read twice. Then fill in every seventh word.)
Biggles ran the engines for fifteen... The others packed the stores into... cabin. 'Get on board,' Biggles shouted; '...take off.'
The Skipper and Grimy ... in. The song of the engines ... the air. It grew quickly to ... roar. The plane did not move. ... gave the engines full power. The ... danced like a leaf in the ...; but she did not go forward.
'... is wrong,' Biggles said. 'We'll have ... get out and find the trouble.'
- 12 (Read and then answer the questions.) Grimy radioed to Bertie: *Ship found. Come at once. Land at new camp ...*
 - a) Where was Bertie?
 - b) What ship had they found?

- c) How will Bertie get to them? d) Where was the new camp?

Chapters 7 and 8

13 Example: **Swimming** was no use. (Reason: Because the water was too cold).
Make sentences with ...**ing** words, and give the reason.

- a) (Shout 'Help') was no use. Because ...
- b) (See the ship's name) brought Ginger's laugh to a sudden end. Because her name ...
- c) (Wait a quarter of an hour) was a good idea. Because ...
- d) '(Fight that crew) is a mad idea,' the Skipper thought. Because the crew ...

14 Example: 'The place has changed, **hasn't it**?' Biggles said. (Yes)

- Choose the correct ending. Then answer Yes or No.
- a) Ginger ate a bar of chocolate, (didn't/doesn't/isn't) he?
 - b) Lavinsky laughed. 'We've got radio, (didn't/don't/haven't) we?'
 - c) 'You won't go too near the ship, (will/won't/shall) you?'
 - d) 'You aren't afraid of them, captain, (do/are/aren't) you?'
 - e) 'That's a lie, (will/is/isn't) it?' Lavinsky said.

Chapters 9 and 10

15 (Put a fact from **A** with the correct fact from **B**.)

A
Grimy made some boards
While they were in the air,
If the *Svelt* stays there,
When you're coming back,

B
she won't get away again.
brush some snow over our
footmarks. that we put under
the skis. Grimy sent a message
to Bertie.

- 16 (Choose the right part.) The hills of Graham Land were like
- a) icecream in a tall glass.
 - b) mountains of icecream on a white plate.
 - c) chocolate icecream on a plate.

17 (Give the reasons.)

- a) It was the most valuable bit of ice in the world. Why?

Because ...

- b) 'What a fool I was!' Lavinsky thought. Why did he think that? Because ...
- c) The bomber took off slowly. Why? Because ...

18 Biggles said, 'The pilot of that plane has just thrown a message to me.'

(Choose the correct answer.)

- a) Who was the pilot? (Ginger/Bertie/Algy)
- b) How did the message arrive? (By radio/In a cigarette box/The pilot shouted it).
- c) What did the message say? (The ice is coming in round the *Svelt*. / A dozen men are coming with guns. / A boat has just left the *Svelt*.)

19 Where did it happen? (Choose the correct place.)

- a) The iceberg stopped near the (*Svelt*/bomber/*Starry Crown*).
- b) Bertie was firing from (a bridge of green ice behind the plane/the end of a ridge).
- c) Biggles landed the bomber close to (the *Svelt*/the first camp/the gold).

Chapter 11

20 Read and then complete.

- i) The wind changed. It blew the icebergs slowly away from the *Svelt*. So Lavinsky and his crew But first, of course, they picked up the
- ii) Larsen wasn't really mad. He got better in hospital; and then he wanted to go back to He told Biggles that he had hidden a under the ice. 'If we go back in your plane, we'

Some titles in this series

1. Recommended for use with children (aged 8-12)
 2. Recommended for use with young people (aged 12-15)
 3. Recommended for use with older people (aged 15 plus)
- No figure: recommended for use with all ages

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Charles Dickens
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 Down the River
Donn Byrne (1.2)
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